

March 19, 2009

Senator Andrew McDonald, Co-chair
Representative Michael Lawlor, Co-chair
Committee Members
Joint Committee on Judiciary
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Sen. McDonald, Rep. Lawlor, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

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On behalf of the 200 members of the Connecticut Orthopedic Society, we are writing to urge your Committee to support Senate Bill No. 1004, An Act Concerning Cooperative Health Care Arrangements and Standards in Contracts between Health Insurers and Health Care Providers.

In taking our position to support the SB 1004, the Society acknowledges the importance of physician practices to operate as a small, independent business with rights to fair and standard contracts offered by Health Insurers. It is common practice for insurance companies to request signed contracts from physicians without full disclosure and transparency of reimbursement rates. This leaves health care professionals in the dark about payment and at a significant business disadvantage. Physicians and other health care professionals need legislation in place to demand that contracts initiated by insurers be clear, concise, complete and unalterable for a specific period of time. In doing so, your Committee and the State Legislature will allow physicians to resist the strong arm of insurers in the State. In the past, it has been suggested that physicians do not have to sign these contracts and they do so at their own risk. However, this is not a realistic approach to the business of health care and more importantly to the quality of care provided to our patients (the majority of whom are covered by managed care plans.)

We applaud the language in SB1004 to legislate cooperative health care arrangements with oversight and scrutiny by the Attorney General's office. Enacting this would enable physicians to negotiate in good faith with health insurers for increased costs of doing business and allow for the reduction of expenses and the improvement of patient safety. It is imperative at this time with the evolving economic crises and the skyrocketing costs of electronic submission technology that physicians be afforded the availability of cooperative health care arrangements as they continue to seek ways to reign in the costs of medicine.

Thank you for your time and serious consideration. If enacted SB 1004, would represent significant and landmark legislation for the practice of medicine in our State and our patients, your constituents. It would also assist physicians around the State with their recruitment of younger physicians and surgeons. The Society and its' members would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and share additional insights and experiences. If we may be of further assistance, please contact the Society's Executive Director, Susan Schaffman at 860-561-5205.

Sincerely,

C. Robert Biondino, M.D.

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President - Connecticut Orthopedic Society
Wallingford, CT